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DREAM, IMAGINATION AND *'ĀLAM AL-MITHĀL*

FAZLUR RAHMAN

The doctrine of a "Realm of Images (*'Ālam al-Mithāl*)" whose genesis and development we shall attempt to portray in the following pages is a specific product of Medieval Muslim mysticism. (It must be said at the outset that the word "*mithāl*", (pl. *muthul*), which literally means "a likeness", is also sometimes applied to Platonic Ideas but the two uses are quite different.) It takes its rise partly from philosophical prophetology, i.e. the Muslim philosophers' attempt to establish a morphological structure of the Prophetic Revelation, and partly from a desire to explain certain religious eschatological doctrines. Generally speaking, the former constitutes the historical antecedent while the latter supplies the basic content of this highly interesting doctrine.

In their Prophetology, the Muslim philosophers, especially Avicenna (Ibn Sīnā, d. 1037) had laid a great emphasis on the figurizing function of imagination in the Prophetic Revelation. The human soul, provided it is pure and strong enough, can contact the unseen in waking life as well as in dreams: all that is required is a withdrawal of the soul from the tumult of sensory life. This is a Greek doctrine and is clearly stated by Plutarch.[1] But just as in dreams the rôle of the imagination is fundamental in that it transforms the purely spiritual truth into symbols by certain laws of motion governing the movement of images, so in waking life when the Prophet receives spiritual Revelation, it becomes clothed in the form of images and figures. According to Ibn Sīnā, just as dreams require interpretation (*ta'bīr*, which literally means "carrying across to the other side of a river"), so does Revelation require, in varying degrees, a symbolic interpretation (*ta'wīl*, which literally means "carrying back to the source or the initial point"). This is how al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā explain psychologically the positive or technical revelation such as the Bible and the Qur'ān,[2] etc.

But although imagination plays this crucial rôle according to Avicenna, he never asserts that images have an ontological existence outside the experiencing subject. Besides, however, this

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psychologico-epistemological approach to the subject of imagination, there are traces in Avicenna's eschatological treatise, entitled *al-Risālah al-Aḍḥawīyah*, of an eschatological doctrine (which Avicenna himself, however, neither affirms nor denies) which seems to give to imagination a quasi-ontological if certainly not a full ontological status. He says, "Some scholars say that when the soul leaves the body and carries the imaginative faculty along with it (i.e. in the case of the intellectually undeveloped souls). . . it is impossible for it to be absolutely free from the body. It then imagines that it is experiencing pains by way of usual physical chastisements, and all that it used to believe during its earthly life (i.e. about the after-life) would happen to it after death . . . . These scholars say that it is not impossible that the soul should imagine an agreeable state of affairs and that it should experience, in after-life, all that is mentioned in the Prophet's Revelations—Gardens and Houries, etc."[3] Some underdeveloped souls are also said to become good or bad demons after death, thanks to their extraordinary power of imagination.

Who are the "scholars" mentioned here by Avicenna? It is possible that he is referring to some Muslim esotericists. But it is more probable that he is referring to some Gnostic-type doctrine in the Middle East where, through the confluence of Semitic religion and Greek philosophy, a great deal of fermentation of religious ideas existed. The theory, which presupposes a considerable development in the field of eschatology, apparently aims at doing justice both to Greek philosophical principles and to the doctrine of physical retribution in some modified form. It is an alternative to the theory adopted by al-Fārābī (who wants to establish it on a Qur'ānic basis), namely, that only intellectually developed souls survive and are blessed and that underdeveloped souls simply perish and that, therefore, there cannot be any talk of punishment in the hereafter.[4] According to Porphyry, the human soul leaves the earthly body at death in a pneumatic encasement which it slowly discards during its ascent and according to another view this pneumatic body changes according to the desires and wishes of the soul.[5]

This doctrine, although it does not give to the image a fully pledged ontological status, has nevertheless pushed its reality to the farthest possible limit on the subjective side: indeed, it seems to obliterate the distinction between the subjective and the

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objective fields—which at this stage, have become irrelevant to it—on the strength of certain phenomena of abnormal psychology. Yet, it is true that it does not assert the ontological reality of the image. This transition, so far as we know, was first effected only within Islamic mysticism and represents an attempt to rationalize certain dogmatic beliefs, particularly of an eschatological nature. While explaining a tradition about the "punishment in the grave" to the effect that a disbeliever is stung in his grave by ninety-nine serpents, each having seven heads, al-Ghazālī (d. 1111) first states that this number refers to the chief vices and their numerous subdivisions which are destructive of human happiness. But then he goes on to say that the serpents mentioned in the tradition are not merely spiritual realities but also "real things". They do really exist although they are perceived by "another sense" with which not everyone is endowed. In this connection al-Ghazālī also points to the phenomenon of terrifying dreams wherein one endures real fright and pain but whereas in the case of such dreams the fright and the pain are real only for the experient, the serpents that assail a wicked person in his grave are objectively existent though perceptible through another sense.[6]

Al-Ghazālī's assertion about the objective existence of the physical objects of dogmatic theology is very different from the usual orthodox formula "we know they do exist but we do not know how". He gives them a clear ontological status but also affirms the possibility of perceiving them "through another sense". And although he does not say that these objects exist in a world of their own—the Universe of Images or symbols,—perceived through a spiritual imagination—that step, in view of the philosophical development portrayed above, was a perfectly logical one to take by his successors. This step was actually taken by Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī (d. 1191) who, so far as we know, was the first to announce formally the existence of a new Realm between the spiritual and the physical.[7]

The motivation behind al-Suhrawardī's affirmation of this Realm, which he calls the Realm of "Suspended Images" (*al-muthul al-mu'allaqah*) or of "Pure Figures" (*al-ashhāb al-mujarradah*), is undoubtedly the validation of dogmatic beliefs and he also claims esoteric experiences of this Realm. The fully developed spiritual souls, according to al-Suhrawardī, will become pure "lights", i.e. spirits in the hereafter. But those who have not thus fully

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developed through "illumination" and those pious souls who have followed faithfully the credal and practical prescriptions of religions shall not be able to rise to the status of pure spirits but shall ascend to the Realm of Suspended Images wherein they shall enjoy the quasi-physical delights of paradise of which they had cherished hopes. Similarly, the damned vicious shall be assigned to the same Realm of Pure Figures, but the figures they shall live with will be obnoxious and torturous. It is obvious, I think, that we have to do here with the same theory of eschatology which we met with in Avicenna, the big difference being that from subjective imagination we have passed into a veritable realm of being, from psychology into ontology.

We are here face to face with a situation, an order of being, where imagination *takes the place of* sense-perception and al-Suhrawardī expressly affirms that it is here that the resurrection of the body takes place, the divine figures (such as angels) become real and all the prophetic eschatological statements come true. This is al-Suhrawardī's *riposte* to the pure philosopers' denial of the resurrection of the body. The difficulty, however, remains that in the case of the fully developed "lights", the resurrection of the flesh is rather meaningless and al-Suhrawardī, indeed, states unequivocally that these souls cannot have a body but return to their primal source. But in that case what happens to their bodies is not at all clear.[8] Indeed, the whole question of the relationship of the Realm of "Pure Figures" with the purely spiritual world on the one hand and the perceptual world on the other is very obscure. On the first point, al-Suhrawardī is completely silent and the implications of his statements are, as we have just seen, contradictory. On the relationship of the World of Figures with the physical world al-Suhrawardī says: "Since these Suspended Figures are not in mirrors or in any such medium and have no substratum wherein to inhere (*maḥall*), it is possible that there should exist in this (physical) world that wherein they manifest themselves. (Thus), sometimes they (actually) move into these objects wherein they manifest themselves and this is whence the demons and devils appear (in the physical realm)."[9]

Thus, although the *ʿĀlam al-Mithāl* is created for the very purpose of serving as a place where the incredible is credible and where the miraculous is somehow made "normal," the physical world is still not saved from the encroachments of the Realm of

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Figures. Indeed, the intellects of the heavenly bodies also project angels from this Realm into the mundane world and that is whence the Angel of Revelation physically manifests himself. Perhaps a better approach to understand the Realm of Figures would be to construe it as a sort of "unconscious of the Universe" where concrete symbols of love, hate, hope and fear are created. But in that case it would be the Unconscious of the World Soul. But this theory, with all its extravagance, would still bring the miraculous into the physical realm. Indeed, inasmuch as the Unconscious of the Universal Soul would, from time to time, make inroads into the quotation life, a systematic path will be opened for the miraculous. Further there arise problems about the relationship between the World Soul and the individual soul, between the World Soul and the individual body and between the individual soul and the World Body, which must be solved if the doctrine is to be intelligible at all.

The pure individual souls can also create new furniture in the *'Ālam al-Miṯhāl* and even project these figures into the realm of physical reality. This is supposed to guarantee the miracles worked by prophets and saints.[10] This doctrine is affirmed both by al-Suhrawardī and Ibn al-'Arabī (1165-1240), the famous Ṣūfī theosoph whose fecundity of imagination created an unprecedentedly rich content for the World of Figures. Since, as we learnt before, imagination takes the place of, and becomes sense-perception in, the World of Figures and since, according to the holders of this doctrine, physical resurrection is a phenomenon of that world, it follows that in the hereafter physical or quasi-physical reality will follow the creative activity of imagination. "The (contents of the) hereafter," says Ibn al-'Arabī, "will be eternally created on the pattern of this world. For the people of Paradise shall say to the objects they desire "Be" and they shall be. Thus, they shall not imagine anything nor shall the thought of a new state of affairs occur to them but that it shall come into existence before their very eyes. Similarly, the people of Hell shall not entertain any fear of a greater torture than they are in but that it shall be realized in them or for them. This is exactly the realization of the idea. The hereafter requires the creation of a world from this world but it will be sensible (not merely mental). By the mere existence of an idea, of an imaginative impulse (*hamm*), of a volition, desire or appetite, all this shall become sensible. In this world (of Physical

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reality) this cannot be achieved by everyone."[11] We thus see that the phenomena of the hereafter are imaginary-real as, indeed, is the nature of the *ʿĀlam al-Mithāl*. A few pages after this, however, Ibn al-ʿArabī draws an inconsistent distinction where he says : " So also God shall bestow upon the people of Paradise desires and imaginary bliss over and above that wherein they already are ; and by virtue of the mere act of a person's imagining or desiring (a higher blissful state), it would be realized in him according as he wished—if he wished it to be mental it would be mental, if he desired it to be sensible it would be sensible."[12] Thus Ibn al-ʿArabī's conception of the relationship between the world of sense and the World of Figures is not a whit clearer than that of al-Suhrawardī.

One of the prominent effects of the belief in the World of Figures is the idea, reiterated by Ibn al-ʿArabī in several places and very commonly accepted by Ṣūfīs, that a person with strong spiritual imagination can be present, or at least can be seen in different places simultaneously by projecting (consciously or unconsciously) his images, etc. Ibn al-ʿArabī tells a story related to him personally by the Ṣūfī Awḥad al-Dīn al-Kirmānī who said that when he was young, he used to serve a spiritual guide who once fell ill with diarrhoea while on a journey. "When we reached Tikrīt," the story continues, "I said to him, 'Master ! let me go and find an anti-diarrhoea medicine from the owner of the charity-hospital', who was sitting in his tent with his men around him. We did not know one another but when he saw me among the throng, he stood up to me, took me by the hand, showed great kindness to me and asked me what I wanted. I described to him the condition of the master and he asked the medicine to be presented which he then gave to me . . . . When I returned to the master and gave him the medicine, I recounted to him the kindness of the administrator-owner of the charity-hospital. The master smiled and said: 'My son ! I was greatly moved by your depth of feeling for my sake and, therefore, I permitted you to go (to the doctor). But when you went, I was afraid lest the hospital-administrator should disappoint you by paying no heed to you. I, therefore, disengaged myself from my physical frame, entered into that of the hospital-administrator and sat in his place . . . . Then I returned to my own body !"[13]

Once the World of Figures is affirmed as a reality, it is in the nature of things impossible or to set limits to it. For this Realm is

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no smaller or bigger than imagination itself. Obviously, concepts of physical impossibility or logical absurdity cannot quite apply there. Further, once the flood of imagination is let loose, the World of Figures goes beyond the specifically religious motivation that historically brought it into existence in the first place and develops into the poetic, the mythical and the grotesque : it seeks to satisfy the relatively suppressed and starved artistic urge. Much of the contents of the *'Ālam al-Mithāl* as it develops later has, therefore, nothing to do with religion but indirectly with the theatre. At this point, the scope of the *'Ālam al-Mithāl* becomes far bigger even than Paradise and Hell where, as Ibn al-'Arabī has just told us, anything will and does happen that any person can imagine. Now, Ibn al-'Arabī has devoted the eighth chapter of his *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyah* to the description of the furniture of the Earth which God created from a grain of clay that was left over from the material used in the construction of Adam's body. This Earth is not just a place where the spiritual appears in the form of figures or where the physical phenomena exist in a "rarefied" form. This Earth is, indeed, so vast that the physical and the heavenly worlds, Paradise and Hell, indeed, even God's Throne and everything contained in all of these—animals, men, angels, spirits, etc.—are mere specks in its spatial magnitude.

It is obvious that this Earth has itself been constructed on the model of the *'Ālam al-Mithāl* and that it is only in the shadowy realm of those systematically cultivated waking dreams that this uncontrolled delirium is possible. Let us note some of the features of this Earth. The first thing we are told is that "Many rational impossibilities, i.e. things which sound reason declares to be absurd exist there." It is only the gnostics, however, "for whose (spectator-) eyes it (i.e. this Earth) constitutes a theatre." The gnostics and the Paradisians, when they wish to enter this world, have to discard their bodies temporarily and leave them here and even the angels have to be led into it by gatekeepers. Everything on this Earth, including minerals and animals, is endowed with full rational life and talks and argues. Within this Earth there are again earths each with separate characteristics. An earth that is made of gold has everything golden—from minerals through fruits, to "men" and so on. But the most exquisite earth is the "earth of saffron" compared to whose women the Houries of Paradise fade into insignificance.

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Time varies in different earths—a moment in one may be a year in another. Mind quickens in that world and there is no resistance to thought. "People" work there—especially in the "earth of saffron"—all for the good, but not out of a sense of obligation. Since there is no inertia in that world and no physical or intellectual "resistance", this presumably must be true of the moral plane as well. Biologically too, the atmosphere of that Earth makes for extraordinary resilience for the very moment you pick a fruit from a tree another one grows or rather appears in a ripe state instantaneously. Their boats are made of stones which attract one another by a natural force until they join together and form themselves into a boat which runs, without any resistance, in whatever direction they want to go—and races on a sea of dust! They have multi-storied cities and towns just as we have multi-storied houses ; only they can build not only by tools and external physical application but also by mere imagination and intention.[14]

I have quoted this description at some length not merely to acquaint ourselves with the richness of this visionary Realm but, having done so, to point out that there is nothing in these contents which could not just as well be contained in the Paradise-concept of dogmatic theology. For the possibilities of Paradise are, *by definition*, absolutely limitless. But Ibn al-'Arabī has expressly said that this is something over and above Paradise. It is also to be noted that, although Ibn al-'Arabī insists that only gnostics can have access to this Realm, there is nothing spiritual or religious about it except Ibn al-'Arabī's statement that this Realm contains a Ka'bah which, like everything else, converses and argues nationally. The Paradise of dogmatic theology is undoubtedly a place of physical comfort and enjoyment but it is also the home of spiritual bliss. It would, I think, be too much to say that the theosoph is indirectly caricaturing the theological concept of Paradise, which he himself not only accepts but elaborates in great detail. Again, the Realm has little metaphysical significance, for Ibn al-'Arabī not only does not discuss its relationship, say, with the spiritual world, but does not place it at all anywhere in his ontological scheme. It is obviously an outworking of the *'Ālam al-Mithāl* but it is also obvious, I think, that it represents an attempt to "secularize" the *'Ālam al-Mithāl* and to use it primarily for artistic purposes of literary creation. But this purely artistic use of the doctrine, if we are right in assessing its nature, does not seem to have found any significant following,

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except, to some extent, in Quṭb al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī, the commentator of al-Suhrawardī who puts certain mystical places, mentioned by al-Suhrawardī in the *'Ālam al-Mithāl*.

Although Ibn al-'Arabī affirms that the *'Ālam al-Mithāl* is intermediate between the spiritual and the physical realms—since this is of the nature of imagination—this doctrine is fully developed only by subsequent thinkers and the ontological position of the *'Ālam al-Mithāl* is really clearly defined in the works of Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī, known as Mullā Ṣadrā (d. 1640). Although there has certainly been a development of the doctrine before Mullā Ṣadrā, it is he who has formulated the organic relationship between the three realms. He develops a principle enunciated by al-Suhrawardī, viz. the "principle of higher possibility" and gives it a new interpretation. In al-Suhrawardī this principle means that the multiplicity that exists in the temporal realm must first exist in the higher realm of the Intellect and he accuses the philosophers of having rendered the ultimate reality devoid of content under the guise of their doctrine of the "absolute simplicity" of the Pure Intellector, as he calls it the "Light of lights."[16] But al-Suhrawardī does not introduce, in this connection, his Realm of Pure Figures as a *grade of being*. Mullā Ṣadrā, however, takes the principle to mean that *nothing can exist at the lowest level unless it has passed through the upper grades of "existence"* and conversely that *nothing moves to a higher grades of "existence" without having passed through the intermediary grades*.[17] This means that everything in the temporal world has a triple existence : from the realm of the Pure Intellect it descends into the *'Ālam al-Mithāl* and thence to the physical realm. Similarly, in the "ascent" where things "return" to their source, the *'Ālam al-Mithāl* is again traversed.

We may, indeed, find it difficult to understand what this "traversing" and "Return" may be since things exist at all the three levels. The only way we can understand it, is what we may understand by union at the level of experience. When an earthly being *experiences* the *'Ālam al-Mithāl* and the Spiritual Realm, it is said to "return" to its primordial source. The "eschatological Return" then can only mean the permanence of this experience. This is what Mullā Ṣadrā seems to teach in his treatise on the Resurrection.[18] In opposition, both to orthodox Islam and to the philosophers, Mullā Ṣadrā maintains the doctrine of universal Resurrection where not only humans and animals but even plants

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and minerals shall "return". Therefore, there is no natural and material existent but that it has an imaginative form in another world and its imaginative form has a rational form in a still another world above it .... Now the reason for saying that every sensible form has as its inner an imaginative form by which it is constituted and to which it "returns" and that similarly every imaginative form has as its inner a rational form ... is that whenever we perceive something ... our imagination also takes on that form ... which subsequently also moves into our intellect as a rational form. Now this would not have been the case if there had not existed an organic relationship between the sensible, the imaginative and the rational. Similarly, with the movement in the opposite direction: when we conceive something rationally, a corresponding image figurizing it comes to exist in our imagination, and when the image in the imagination becomes very strong, it comes to exist externally before our sense-perception."[19]

In fact, the whole treatise does nothing but attempt to show that the orders of reality are intimately and organically linked with one another in a source-sequence form. But then what does the "Return" mean? The answer must be: a permanent state of experience of the source and removal of estrangement from it. In order to achieve this end, Mullā Ṣadrā, following the earlier line of philosophers, gives arguments for the "Return" of the developed intellects to the Divine Intellect. The undeveloped souls he puts, again following his predecessors, in the *ʿĀlam al-Mithāl*. But in order to make imaginative experience possible not only for animal souls but also for matter,—for otherwise the "Universal Return" cannot be maintained—he extends the *ʿĀlam al-Mithāl* to all of these and contends that even material bodies have invisible life. To the question: What is, then, the difference between undeveloped humans and the lower beings? his reply is that human souls, even if they are undeveloped, keep their individuality after death but that the lower orders of being are resurrected only as a species—they return to their Image-Idea.[20]

It is interesting to notice, before closing, the difference of opinion among Mullā Ṣadrā, Quṭb al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī (d. 1311) and Ibn al-ʿArabī with regard to the animal souls whereas according to Ṣadrā, these lose their individuality and survive only as species—Image. Quṭb al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī (pupil of a pupil of Ibn al-ʿArabī) and Ibn al-ʿArabī affirm the existence of individual animals in the *ʿĀlam al-*

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Mithāl. Moreover, against Mullā Ṣadrā, both Ibn al-'Arabī and Quṭb al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī make the animal souls in the *'Ālam al-Mithāl* fully endowed with reason. Again, whereas for Ibn al-'Arabī everything there is rational, including plants and material objects, according to Quṭb al-Dīn al-Shīrāzī the material objects do not even have life. He tells us, "As for the elements and their composite objects in the *'Ālam al-Mithāl* they have no souls. But the animals . . . are endowed with rational souls just like human beings there. Most of these souls are those which have departed from the bodies of animals (on earth) if (transmigration of souls) is correct, or, if transmigration is false, have departed from human bodies (on earth) and have attached themselves to the bodies of animals in that Realm, if there have still remained in them some bad qualities . . . ."[21] It is not at all easy to understand, however, what is the use of reason in the world of imagination.

The *'Ālam al-Mithāl* increases in importance during the later centuries of the Muslim Middle Ages, and forms an integral part of Ṣūfī spiritual culture. Without formally denying the reality of the physical world, the Muslim spiritualists—in a milieu of political uncertainty, socio-economic imbalance and general external deterioration—sought refuge in a Realm that was more satisfying and certainly more liquid and amenable to imaginative powers. Within Ṣūfism there arose only one voice, that of Shaykh Aḥmad Sirhindī (d. 1625), that counselled caution and sobriety. Sirhindī accepted the *'Ālam al-Mithāl* as other Ṣūfīs did but he sought to divest it of its ontological status and declared it to be a mere experience. In a letter to a pupil he wrote : "They (the Ṣūfīs) have divided this contingent world into three : the world of spirits, the world of figures and the physical world. They have assigned to the *'Ālam al-Mithāl* (the world of figures) an intermediate position between the world of spirits and that of bodies. They have also said that the *'Ālam al-Mithāl* is a kind of mirror for the other two worlds, reflecting their contents with an image appropriate for everything. That world (i.e. the *Ālam al-Mithāl*) in itself does not possess any forms or figures, these appear in it as mere reflections from the other two worlds—just like a mirror which in itself does not contain any form and whatever forms come to exist in it, come (as reflexions) from outside.

"When this has been made clear, let it be understood that the spirit, before its attachment to the body, was in its own

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(spiritual) realm . . . and if, after its attachment to the body it has descended, it has done so through its love for the world of bodies, it has nothing to do with the *ʿĀlam āl-Mithāl*, either before or after this attachment. There is nothing more than the fact that, by the Grace of God, it can sometimes contemplate some of its own conditions and states (i.e. whether good or bad) in the mirror of (that) world (of images) . . . *ʿĀlam al-Mithāl* is for seeing-not for being ; the place of being is either the spiritual world or the physical world."[22]

In the system of Shāh Walīy Allāh of Delhi (1702-1763), however, the *ʿĀlam al-Mithāl* returns to play a central rôle. Shāh Walīy Allāh too, like his predecessors, describes the *ʿĀlam al-Mithāl* as the ontological Realm of the order of Imagination, intermediate between the spiritual and the perceptible worlds and defines it as "that wherein ideas take on the form of corporeal things (i.e. images) and corporeal entities are rendered more idea-like".[23] He also insists that such an idea-image is the *necessary* link between the spiritual and the material and that everything created in the world must pass through this stage before its actual creation.[24] The idea behind this doctrine seems to be that pure intellect cannot create a material being, a universal cannot generate a particular or without the universal passing into the form of an idea-image. This view appears to be psychologically sound.

But although Shāh Walīy Allāh regards the "World of Symbols" as only one of the three Realms of Reality, like his predecessors, particularly Ibn al-ʿArabī and Mullā Ṣadrā, the service into which it is pressed in his system is most central in terms of the world-process. The *Mithāl* or the "symbol" turns out to be the most fundamental law regulating all relations in the process of Reality whatever : all *relatedness* in any form is a function of this law of symbolization. Indeed, everything in the world is in a definite sense a symbol of everything else. It is essentially a re-statement of the old Neoplatonic principle that "everything is in everything else according to its own measure". Not everything can be a symbol of everything *in the same sense* but only in a given sense : symbols are relational functions and these relations are irrevocably fixed by the ultimate and intrinsic nature of Reality, which Shāh Walīy Allāh terms "The Primordial Intention (*ʿināyat-i ūlā*)" wherein all things have been paired together in appropriateness and harmony.[25]

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Being the fundamental ground of all relations, the *Mithāl* or the Symbol, this "divine magic" which binds the spiritual and the material, and, indeed, everything to everything else, performs yet another all-important function in the system of Walīy Allāh. This is to declare the essential divinity of the world but at the same time to soften the rigours of Ibn al-'Arabī's metaphysical pantheism and keep a valid enough distinction between God and the world.[26] Both these ends are achieved by affirming a *Mithāl*—relationship between God and the world. Thanks to this Primary Image, the world is God-like yet other than God: "It is that whereby the (mirroring capacity) of the world is perfected and is thus to be counted as a part of the world, on the one hand, and, on the other, is in manifestation of God and is a form of His being. This is the Divine Magic which establishes the (primary) relationship (in the world-process) .... It is the Divine Epiphany (*Tajallī*) absolutely speaking."[27] Walīy Allāh's whole thought, both at the theoretical and the practical levels, is pervaded by the idea of "mediation" or synthesis wherein contradictions in Reality are resolved by establishing proper and binding relationships rather than by negating these relationships and affirming a simple unity as is the case with Hinduism or the well-known brands of mysticism. Discovering of relations and middle terms, therefore, constitutes the very ethos of this "philosophy of mediationism". The *'Ālam al-Mithāl*, so construed, then, must play the pivotal rôle in it.

NOTES

1. F. Rahman, *Prophecy in Islam*, London, 1958, p. 72, n. 27.
2. Al-Fārābī, *al-Madīnah al-Fāḍilah*, chapter on Prophethood; Avicenna, *Kitāb al-Shifā'*, Psychology, IV, 3; also F. Rahman, *ibid.*, Chapter II, Section II and notes.
3. Avicenna, *al-Risālah al-Aḍḥawīyah*, pp. 124-25.
4. Al-Fārābi, *al-Madīnah al-Fāḍilah*, chapter on the Bliss.
5. F. Rahman, op. cit., p. 81.
6. *Iḥyā' 'Ulūm al-Dīn*, vol. IV, the Book of Eschatology, the chapter on "The Punishment in the Grave".
7. *Ḥikmat al-Ishrāq* (Opera Mystica et Metaphysica, vol. II), Teheran, 1952, pp. 230, 232-34.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 223 ff.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 231.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 242, line 10 ff.
11. *Al-Futūḥāt al-Makkīyah*, chap. 47.
12. *Ibid.*, chap. 65.

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13. *Ibid.*, Chap. 8.
14. The whole of this description comes from *ibid*, Chap. 8.
15. Al-Suhrawardī, op. cit., e. g. p. 234 (Commentary).
16. *Ibid.*, p. 154 ff.
17. *Rasā'il*, Teheran, 1302 A.H., p. 352.
18. *Ibid.*, pp. 341-70.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 355, last line ff.
20. *Ibid*, p. 350, line 16 ff.
21. Al-Suhrawardī, op. cit., p. 232 (Commentary).
22. *Maktūbāt*, Lucknow (n.d.), vol. III, p. 57.
23. *Ḥujjat Allāh al-Bāligḥah*, Cairo, 1322 A.H., p. 10 :

اعلم . . . ان فی‌الوجود عالماً غیر عنصری یتمثل فیه المعانی باجسام مناسبة لها

but more fully in *Saṭa'āt*, Karachi (n.d.), p. 5:

آنجا معانی لباس می پوشند و اجسام و جسمانیت برنگ معانی بر می آیند ـ

24. *Ḥujjat Allāh*, p. 10 : یتحقق هنالک الاشیاء قبل وجودها فی‌الارض

see also *Saṭa'āt*, p. 5 ; the whole of *Saṭa'ah*, No. 6.

25. *Saṭa'āt*, p. 4 : اصل این علاقه و این تحصیص مستقر است در عنایت اولیٰ آنجا هر صورت جوهریه را با صور عرضیهٔ مناسبه آن مؤاخات بسته اند و دست در آغوش یکدیگر ساخته ذات در مرتبهٔ عقل . . . این مؤاخات را واجب گردانید

and again *ibid.*, p. 5 :

درمیان آن معانی و آن صور جسمانیه علاقه‌ها باشد بحسب اصل عنایت اولیٰ -

26. For an account of Ibn al-'Arabī's metaphysical pantheism, see the *Introduction* to my forthcoming *Selected Letters of Sirhindi*. This work, being published by the Pakistan Historical Society, Karachi, is expected to be out shortly.
27. *Saṭa'āt*, p. 6.

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